in Christ: Andrew Fountain's blog

The Structure of Revelation

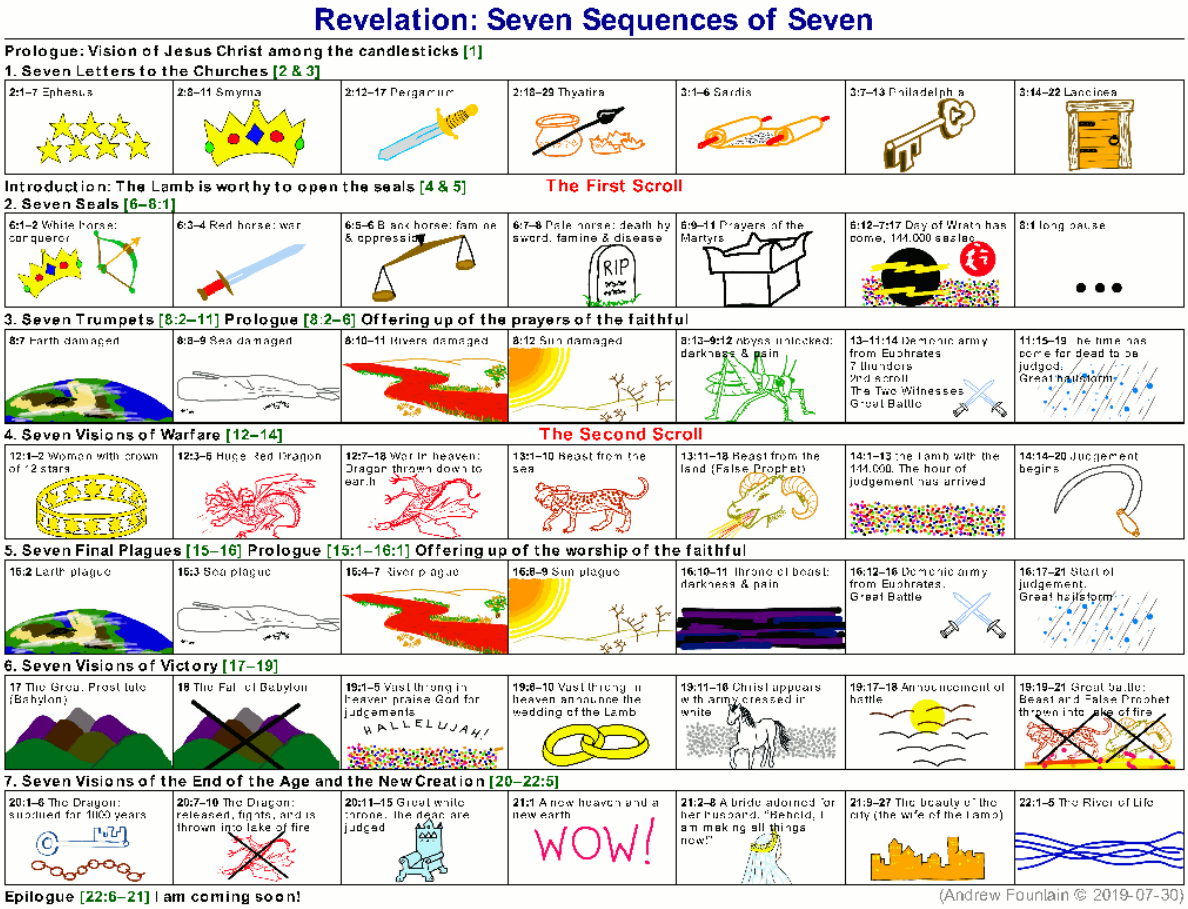
Survey of suggested structures of Revelation

The clearest evidence of structure, which is universally recognized is in the sequences of seven. Four of these are explicit:

- Seven letters to churches (2:1-3:22)
- Seven seals (6:1-8:1)
- Seven trumpets (8:2-11:19)
- Seven plagues/bowls (15:1-16:21)

In addition it is often recognized that seven visions of warfare can be identified in 12:1-14:20. (There are some minor variations of where some of the divisions are placed.)

Many have gone on to divide the last six chapters into two more sequeneces of seven, making a total of seven sevens. This can be visualized pictorially in a chart (pdf) .


Revelation: Seven Sequences of Seven
Prologue: Vision of Jesus Christ among the candlesticks [1]
1. Seven Letters to the Churches [2 & 3]
2:1–7 Ephesus
2:8–11 Smyrna
2:12–17 Pergamum
2:18–29 Thyatira
3:1–6 Sardis
3:7–13 Philadelphia
3:14–22 Laodicea
Introduction: The Lamb is worthy to open the seals [4 & 5]
The First Scroll
2. Seven Seals [6–8:1]
6:1–2 White horse: conquerer
6:3–4 Red horse: war
6:5–6 Black horse: famine & oppression
6:7–8 Pale horse: death by sword, famine & disease
RIP
6:9–11 Prayers of the Martyrs
6:12–7:17 Day of Wrath has come, 144,000 sealed
8:1 long pause
3. Seven Trumpets [8:2–11] Prologue [8:2–6] Offering up of the prayers of the faithful
8:7 Earth damaged
8:8–9 Sea damaged
8:10–11 Rivers damaged
8:12 Sun damaged
8:13–9:12 Abyss unlocked: darkness & pain
8:13–11:14 Demonic army from Euphrates
7 thunders
2nd scroll
The Two Witnesses
Great Battle
11:15–19 The time has come for dead to be judged:
Great hailstorm
4. Seven Visions of Warfare [12–14]
The Second Scroll
12:1–2 Woman with crown of 12 stars
12:3–6 Huge red Dragon
12:7–18 War in heaven: Dragon thrown down to earth
13:1–10 Beast from the sea
13:11–18 Beast from the land (False Prophet)
14:1–13 The Lamb with the 144,000. The hour of judgement has arrived
14:14–20 Judgement begins
5. Seven Final Plagues [15–16] Prologue [15:1–16:1] Offering up of the worship of the faithful
16:2 Earth plague
16:3 Sea plague
16:4–7 River plague
16:8–9 Sun plague
16:10–11 Throne of beast: darkness & pain
16:12–16 Demonic army from Euphrates. Great Battle
16:17–21 Start of judgement. Great hailstorm
6. Seven Visions of Victory [17–19]
17 The Great Prostitute (Babylon)
18 The Fall of Babylon
19:1–5 Vast throng in heaven praise God for judgements
HALLELUJAH!
19:6–10 Vast throng in heaven announce the wedding of the Lamb
19:11–16 Christ appears with army dressed in white
19:17–18 Announcement of battle
19:19–21 Great battle: Beast and False Prophet thrown into lake of fire
7. Seven Visions of the End of the Age and the New Creation [20–22:5]
20:1–6 The Dragon: shackled for 1000 years
20:7–10 The Dragon: released, fights, and is thrown into lake of fire
20:11–15 Great white throne, the dead are judged
21:1 A new heaven and a new earth
WOW!
21:2–8 A bride adorned for her husband. "Behold, I am making all things new!"
21:9–27 The beauty of the city (the wife of the Lamb)
22:1–5 The River of Life
Epilogue [22:6–21] I am coming soon!
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Fitting the sequence into a structure

For the purposes of this discussion, it will be assumed that the sevenfold sequence of sevens is essentially correct. However, much more work has to be done before there is a useful structure that helps us understand how the whole book fits together. There is disagreement concerning how these seven sequences related to each other. The suggested solutions fall broadly into three categores

a. The sequences are consecutive, resulting in 49 visions spanning the resurrection to the final judgement.
b. The sequences run in parallel, with each having seven visions spanning the same period.
c. A combination of the above, where each sequence of seven is an expansion of the final vision of the previous sequence, expandi the vision like opening a telescope. A variant of this is to suggest some recapitulation in some sequences.

Absolute time markers

In the following discussion I will use the abbreviation §x for sequence x and §x.n for the n'th vision of sequence x.

In order to make sense of the visions, it is useful to identify all the absolute time markers. The following can be readily identified:

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- §2 (seals) starts at resurrection and so does §4 (visions of warfare)
- All sequences end with some kind of judgement except §7, which takes us even further into the future.

Relative time markers

- §3 and §5 are extremely similar in every vision
- §2.6 and §4.6 both reference 144,000

It has already been pointed out that §2.1 and §4.1 start at the same time, so it would make sense that the time period covered in §2- is repleated in §4-§5.

- The false trinity and false bride: Dragon/sea-beast/prophet/Babylon span the last four sequences, being introduced in order, an then destroyed in the exact reverse order.

This suggests that the last four sequences belong together and there are some chronological dependencies between them. The detail dependencies will be discussed later.

- §4 Dragon introduced
  - §4 Beast (false Christ) & False prophet introduced
    - §6 Great Prostitute, Babylon (false bride) introduced
    - §6 Great Prostitute destroyed
  - §6 Beast & False prophet destroyed
- §7 Dragon destroyed

Time refeence defining relationship between §2 (seals) and §3 (trumpets)

Since both sequences end with a judgement scene, the temptation is to make them run in parallel

seal 1	seal 2	seal 3	seal 4	seal 5	seal 6	seal 7
trump 1	trump 2	trump 3	trump 4	trump 5	trump 6	trump 7

There is a key temporal link between §2 and §3: In §2.6 (specifically 7:1-3), the angels of §3 are told not to blow their trumpets until §2.6 is complete (the 144,00 are sealed). The angels who hurt the earth, sea etc (trumpets) cannot start until the 144,000 have been marked to keep them safe.

This places the whole sequence of trumpets as an expansion of the 6th and 7th seals

seal 1	seal 2	seal 3	seal 4	seal 5	seal 6	seal 7
					trumps 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Proposal

(to be fleshed out shortly)

- Book falls into 2 halves, plus a prologue and epilogue
  - 1-5 - Prologue (letters to churches)
  - 6-11 - First series of visions, sequences 2 & 3
  - 12-22:5 - Second series of visions, sequences 4, 5, 6 & 7
  - 22:6-21 - Epilogue: I am coming soon!
- **Evidence:**
- parallels between certain sequences:
  - §2.6 and §4.6 both reference 144,000
  - 3rd and 5th almost identical
- Opening and closing of Dragon sequence
- Change of character between first and second half
  - the imagery had almost no overlap (Dragon/beast etc)
- John is given a second scroll just before the end of the first
- Makes for a straightforward integration with Jesus & Paul (matching sequences 2 & 4)

(Andrew Fountain 2016-06-0

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